

March 13, 2009

Senator Charlie Huggins
Room 119, State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Huggins,

SUBJECT: SUPPORT TOURISM MARKETING

My name is Heather Fortune, I live in Big Lake and work for a small lodging and tour company: Denali Lodges & Alaska Denali Tours. I am writing you today to garner your support for Alaska's tourism and marketing programs. First though, I think I should point out that I consider myself lucky; lucky to live and work in such a beautiful place, as indeed our state's beauty is paramount; lucky, that I have a job where I get to share my own personal experiences of this magnificent state with the visitors and tourists to Alaska; lucky, that my paycheck is derived from a source that I can be proud of, and that I get to directly reinvest tourism dollars in a very local and personal way.

I also fear. I fear that the recent economic challenges felt nationally, and have only begun to manifest themselves here at home; because so much of our state derives income from seasonal work, we too are about to feel the full brunt of this recession. Recently in the news we have seen large cruise companies have already planned on pulling their ships from our beautiful ports, and with them goes the millions of dollars visitors spend all over the state, an estimated \$55 million according to KTUU. As many of our guests are either pre or post cruise guests, for me this loss is tangible and significant. We don't yet know the full devastation that this will cause the local economies, or how fast the economic drought will spread, but from my own experience I can tell you that it has already begun.

It is imperative that we reinvest our tourism tax revenues in Alaska Tourism marketing programs, specifically the \$9 million generated from the vehicle rental taxes. Reinvestment of this money is a constructive use of tax dollars that we in the industry have worked so hard to generate. It is ever more important that we invest in marketing our state with a competitive approach, which requires meaningful funding. Your continued support is necessary.

Sincerely,

Heather Fortune
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